

The HARPSICHORD



HARPSICHORD

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THE COVER

Filippo Bonanni drew our cover plate in 1723 for his book "*Gabinetto Armonico*" The drawing, while artistically pleasing, is far from accurate. It serves as an introduction to a curious instrument which appears in *Clavichord of Note* beginning on page 10.

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GO FOR BAROQUE

by Hal Haney



We are always pleased when we are contacted for advertising, but we are especially pleased when those advertisers are members of I.H.S. The new ad headed BAR-

OQUE IMPORTS is particularly interesting. It comes to us from member Sarah Arnott, housewife, piano teacher and business woman who graduated from St. Olaf College and whose hobby is painting.

Her business, Baroque Imports, is located in Utica, Montana, a quiet western town today, which was once the wild, uninhibited center of the Judith Roundup. Cowboy artist Charles Russell participated in the roundup for several years and immortalized Utica in one of his famous paintings. Thousands of head of cattle and untold hundreds of free-spending, fun-seeking cowboys gave Utica the name "Sporting Center of the Judith Basin." Back in November of 1936, when old-timer Henry Parrent was reminiscing about that part of the country mentioned that the last time he saw Calamity Jane, she had two tents side by side in Utica. She was living in one and "washing clothes" for the shearers and freighters (sheep and cattlemen) in the other. (Calamity Jane was known to be most generous with her many talents.) Even as far back as October 9, 1890, the *Fergus County Argus* (published in the nearby town of Lewistown where charter I.H.S. member Francis J. Zahler lives) wrote of Utica; "Success never follows a community where they dig potatoes on Sunday."

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But the *Fergus County Argus* never heard of harpsichords or Sarah and Jim Arnott. For today, while Utica is sleeping in the shadow of protecting buttes in the big-sky country, Sarah and John are telling the world about their harpsichord, recorder and woodwind business. All this in a town located 800 miles from the largest city to the west (Seattle), and an equal distance from its largest city to the south (Denver). Utica's population is 62. We're proud that they choose *The Harpsichord* as part of their advertising campaign.

If you receive a pink slip with this issue of *The Harpsichord*, it means your subscription is due for renewal. Because of our limited staff we can't bill each member individually, and the extra postage causes a drain on our modest treasury. Therefore we sincerely hope you will use the return self-addressed envelope to send your check for the next 12 months membership. The dues are still only \$8. We don't want you to miss a single issue.

Speaking of issues, our next issue features one of the most comprehensive, in-depth builder interviews we have ever done. We visit the shop of William Dowd of Cambridge, Mass. and see, step by step, how his famous harpsichords are made. In one exceptional series of photographs, (each one taken 5 seconds apart), we watch the installation of a soundboard. It is a unique experience and not unlike watching a ballet. All photographs are original, having never been published before, and were taken especially for members of the Society.

Dowd speaks openly about his own work, his ex-partner Frank Hubbard, his ex-instructor John Challis as well as other builders and personalities. His wit is sharp and his perception of people and events is remarkable. I sincerely believe that this next issue, will rank along with the John Challis issue as the most interesting and informative we have ever published.

Hal Haney

SYMPATHETIC VIBRATIONS THE RUCKERS GENOOTSCHAP

by Wallace Zuckermann

I had hoped to complete for this column a study on the vexing question of which is the "correct" harpsichord keyboard, narrow French span or wide modern piano span. For some reason, none of the writers on harpsichords (including myself) have dealt with this important practical question in any detail. I propose to cite keyboard measurements of about fifty antique instruments of the various national schools and to see if we can arrive at some conclusions from these figures for the modern maker. But this will now have to wait 'till the next issue of *The Harpsichord*.

In the meantime, I would like to give you a brief and very belated report on the meeting of the Ruckers Genootschap in Antwerp, May 10th-12th, 1970. The Ruckers Genootschap was formed by people in Antwerp to bring some of the interest in harpsichords back to the city which was once the harpsichord center of the world.

The meeting in May represented perhaps the first attempt in modern times at an international "convention" of harpsichord makers, players, museum curators and interested bystanders. The announcement of the list of speakers included John Barnes of the Edinburg formerly Raymond Russell collection, Hubert Bedard of Paris, Dr. Alfred Berner of the Berlin Musikinstrumenten Museum, Mme. H. de Chambure of the Paris Conservatoire, Mrs. J. Lambrechts-Douilliz of the Vleeshuis Ruckers Collection in Antwerp who is also the secretary of the Ruckers Genootschap,



Dr. Van der Meer of the Nurnberg Museum, Edwin Ripin who has his own collection in Forest Hills, and harpsichord makers Schutze, Skowronek and Frank Hubbard. This was a most impressive list for a first meeting, and, as it turned out, everyone delivered his paper with the exception of Frank Hubbard, to the disappointment of all.

About one to two hundred people attended the colloquium, among them Hugh Gough, Gustav Leonhardt, Bill Ross, Martin Scholz, Scott Odell (of the Smithsonian) Kurt Wittmayer and Knud Kaufmann and son, the Brussels makers and restorers.

Most interesting and controversial question discussed at the meeting concerned the fate of the Ruckers instruments at the Vleeshuis, and by extension, the fate of all the unrestored old harpsichords in the possession of museums and private individuals. Immediately, two opposing points of view emerged, and the gathering was almost evenly split into two camps, with much heated and acrimonious discussion between them. One point of view, held in general by museum people, called for the restoration of the old harpsichords before they deteriorated any further, and to allow "qualified" persons to play on the restored instruments and thus to know what the old ones sounded like. The opposing group, mostly consisting of makers, derided this point of view, especially the idea that only qualified people would be allowed to play the restored instrument. No amount of banging on a harpsichord, they contended, has ever done one tenth the damage to an instrument that is done by the hand of the "expert" restorer.

The anti restoration people marshalled a number of very convincing arguments: (1) Most of the deteriorated unrestored instruments are in no condition to be brought into playing shape without major alteration or additions; (2) Even if it were possible to restore them, the resultant sound would not be an accurate replica of the sound the instrument once had,

(Continued on page 20)



USE OF THE HARPSICHORD AND MOOG SYNTHESIZER IN COMPOSING ELECTRONIC MUSIC

by Walter E. Sear

EDITORS PREFACE:

Three years ago, we started planning an article on the use of the harpsichord in contemporary music, especially electronic music. At that time, we did not know who the leader in this field was, but because of the nature of the subject, we decided to wait until we found that leader.

As our clipping file on electronic music grew, we kept seeing the name Walter E. Sear. His name appeared on promotional pieces of leading recording companies, on motion picture credits and in professional journals. When the Academy Award winning picture "Midnight Cowboy" was released, we noticed that he was responsible for much of the musical sound track.

This seemed to be our man.

Upon checking the background of Walter E. Sear, we discovered that he was a long time associate with Robert Moog and was responsible for many of the advances and modifications incorporated in the Moog Synthesizer. He holds a B.M. from Curtis Institute (a major in composition), a B.A. from George Washington University, an M.M. from Catholic University of America and Doctoral studies with Dr. Otto Leuning of Columbia University.

In addition to his electronic work, he is a professional tuba player as well as a designer and builder of these instruments. He has appeared with numerous radio, TV and recording orchestras, the Air Force Symphony, Radio City Music Hall Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, etc. His compositions include two symphonies, three string quartets, five brass quintets, four brass quartets and many sonatas and etudes. His compositions have been performed by various groups including the National Symphony Orchestra, the Philadelphia

Orchestra, Kansas City String Quartet, etc.

His recording credits include MGM Records, RCA Victor Records, Columbia Records and Command Records. His latest recording using the harpsichord electronically is "The Age of Electronics", 946-S on the Command label. His radio and television commercial credits are too numerous to list here but they include the sound tracks for Chase and Sanborn Coffee, Pepto Bismol, Gillette Blades, Tide Detergent, Fresh Deodorant, etc., etc., etc.

He owns and operates SEAR ELECTRONIC MUSIC PRODUCTIONS in New York City where he provides the most advanced state of art capability for the creation of electronic, live and mixed music and sound. His company is the sole eastern distributor and servicing agency for Moog equipment. He is also noted for the creation of original and unique scores. His services include film and TV scores, orchestra and ballet scores, concert performances of electronic music, electronic music seminars for schools and universities etc. We found Walter Sear to be a most friendly and cooperative man who was happy to share his knowledge with members of the Society. His article follows.

The history of electronic music starts almost from the moment of birth of the modern electronic age. With the invention of the electron vacuum tube by Dr. Lee DeForest, the whole direction of a new musical trend took shape. First results were startling albeit obvious. With electronic amplification of sound, the entire phonograph industry was revolutionized. Early experiments were made with the expansion of orchestral sound in the concert hall by use of electronic amplification. It was only a short step to begin to modify existing instruments electronically and to

develop completely electronic musical instruments.

The heart of any electronic music studio today is certainly the Moog Synthesizer. Used alone or in conjunction with other electronic and conventional instruments such as the harpsichord, the orchestral palette of the composer is expanded to vastly greater proportions.

The Moog Synthesizer enables the composer to "invent" his own particular sound color for each of the separate parts of his composition. It consists of an array of separate electronic modules, sound generators, sound modifiers and amplifiers which are inter-connected by patch cords. In appearance, this system is not unlike a telephone switchboard. The order of sounds is controlled by a conventional organ type keyboard so that the nuances of a fine keyboard artist can be applied to the musical interpretation. The resulting performance advances beyond any "mechanical" or "computerized" stages since a musician-artist must always play and interpret the music on a keyboard.

Through the Moog Synthesizer, a vast new repertory of sound is available to the composer, and with this goes the need to determine which sound is appropriate to best enhance the musical idea. The human factor of artistic determination is never eliminated, but enhanced.

Beside a new, complete family of pitched sound, as well as nonpitched (percussive) sound, a completely new method of controlling these sounds is available by using the keyboard. Although we can set the keyboard for conventional scale patterns of whole and half steps, we can also set it for any narrower or wider scale. The normal half steps can also be tuned narrower or wider. Notes can be struck individually, each with their own pitch, or the keyboard can be

adjusted so that one note will slide up or down to the next. The sound quality of the note can be altered as it is played, allowing for change within a given time pattern as the note is struck. Together with standard recording studio "tracking" techniques (where recording can be done on one narrow band of a two-inch wide tape and then successive layers recorded), many interesting textures and sounds can be developed as a cumulative final sound.

The harpsichord is one of the more important instruments in our studio. We use a Baldwin Electronic harpsichord which is built on a cast aluminum frame and has one manual. The plectra are made of Delrin and a small set screw enables the adjustment of tension for touch and voicing. The key mechanism is fairly standard counterweighted with touch adjustment screws. The wrest plank consists of neoprene rubber with standard tuning pin inserts. There is no sound board on the instrument other than a decorative formica panel. Instead, there are two sets of electrical pickups, one over the approximate center of the strings and the second, over the bridge. Four selector switches enable the player to select which treble and bass of each pick-up that he chooses to use. They can also be mixed. The outputs of left and right channels pass through two expression pedals which are standard AGO and the final output is fed into a preamplifier to boost the output power to line level. An acoustical mute is provided.

I am aware that the Baldwin Harpsichord may not be held in too high repute by the serious harpsichordist, but as a primary signal producing instrument, it is of great use in the studio.

Since the primary function of the studio is for recording, we prefer to avoid acoustical instruments since, in the process of using a microphone, some fidelity is lost in recording. The instrument can be recorded by direct connection to a tape recorder, but we rarely use the output sound of the harpsichord untreated. We generally feed the output into our Moog Syn-

thesizer and the actual registration is controlled by use of voltage controlled filters and amplifiers. We can add many interesting effects either to purify the sound of the harpsichord or to alter it beyond recognition!

By filtering harmonics, we can weight any half octave of the overtone structure to give us exactly the sound we desire. By varying the harmonics with a voltage controlled filter, we can achieve a tamberal vibrato, or even a wah-wah effect. By using voltage controlled amplifiers, we can get amplitude (loudness) vibrati. We can also vary the attack and decay pattern to completely change the character of the instrument.

Many other techniques can be used to treat the sound. Reverberation is important to give the instrument a feeling of space (being played in a live room) and tape echo (by using a tape loop) can create many interesting effects.

For the purists, we feel that we can achieve exactly the harpsichord sound they desire through proper filtering. It is my general belief that eventually all acoustical instruments will be amplified. The concert halls are being built larger and deader and in order to be heard, we will need more and more electrical amplification. As the amplifying systems improve, a better fidelity can be achieved and more important, the instrument can be adjusted to the hall by adding bass or treble as needed. The Baldwin electric piano is a good example of how well this can be done. It gives the pianist at least a fighting chance of competing with an orchestra in the concerto literature.

Ultimately, the contemporary audience is more used to electronically reproduced sound than sound in the concert hall. He hears far more music over TV and his high-fi than in actual live performances.

Various other instruments are standard studio equipment. These include organs, reverberation units, tape delay and echo units etc., which are used to further expand the sound horizon of the composer and arranger.

The new problems encountered

and the new skills required for the composer and arranger are the great challenge in electronic music. The composer-arranger as well as the programmer-technician for other composer-arrangers, requires a thorough knowledge of both music and electronics. The conventional arranging problems of selecting the proper sound for each musical line are still present, but the number of sound choices have expanded, multiplying the critical artistic decisions that have to be made.

After a concept of sound has been determined, the equipment must be connected to produce the required result without the need to rely on known instrumental sounds. Often, as in conventional orchestration, some experimentation is necessary. But the number of possible choices has increased a thousand fold. Engineering considerations have to be taken into account since the actual tape recording operation is also done in the studio. Many of the techniques of modifying sound through use of tape recorders and standard studio equipment have to be considered as well. Also, conventional and new performance problems will arise with each new sound created.

When working with another artist, the additional consideration of communicating ideas arises. It is difficult to describe a sound that you have heard only in your head. A common musical background is a good jumping off place, but it is important for the programmer-engineer not to let his own musical concepts override those of the composer.

Ultimately, the results are the only thing to be judged.

Electronic musical instruments, in themselves, are neither good nor bad. Like their conventional non-electronic counterparts, they can be used well or poorly. They are simply logical technological extensions of the standard instruments. To the listener, they can provide a fascinating experience in the realm of new sound.

Walter E. Sear

HARPSICHORD FESTIVAL SCHEDULED

For December 28-30, 1970

by Hilda Jonas

The Put-In-Bay Harpsichord Festival, which I have had the pleasure of directing for a number of years, has attracted harpsichord enthusiasts from all over the world. Professionals and amateurs from more than a dozen states have attended the yearly festivals which I created in 1965 with the help of Dr. Therou McClure from Ohio State University.

Last year, one participant who lives in Germany, had asked to come during the Easter or Christmas vacation which is a better time for trips to the U.S.A. Others followed in this request to participate in a festival in my Cincinnati studio where I have three harpsichords in one room. Each instrument is so positioned that they can be easily played together. And so, the "Put-In-Bay Continued" began in Cincinnati. The first one took place in Spring of 1970, and the next one will take place from December 28 through December 30, 1970.

My three studio harpsichords are very different from each other but their sound matches magically. The disposition of the instruments have much in common. They all have 4 registers; 8'x8'x4'x16', 2 lute stops, 2 keyboards; the registers are each served by an individual pedal and the 5th pedal serves as coupler. The lute stops are hand operated.

My oldest instrument was built by Walter Ebeloe in Hamburg, Germany about 30 years ago. It has leather plectra. This particular instrument has been reconditioned several times by such builders as Wallace Zuckermann and John Challis. It has traveled all over the world.

The second instrument was built for me by Eric Herz. The plectra are leather with the upper 8' quill. It is a beautiful harpsichord. The base

wood is mahogany with center panels of Inca wood burl. The inlay strips are holly and the border around the inlay is figured mahogany. It has a maple wrestplank and spruce sound board. This harpsichord is quite large and only travels to special events such as the Bach Solo Concerto with the Cincinnati Symphony and the all Bach Recital at the New York Cultural Center.

The third harpsichord available to students at the Festival is a full-sized concert instrument, Neupert's Vivaldi model. It is made of Rosewood, with two registers leather and two quill. It is easy to transport and so travels to many colleges and universities for concerts and workshops.

Subjects of the past Festivals have ranged from "The Suite", "The Concerto", "Well-Tempered Clavier" to "Variation and Improvisation."

Repeated requests for the Chromatic Fantasi and Fugue by J. S. Bach have determined this December's Festival subject; "Toccatas and Fantasias." The Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue will be the center of the Seminar and we hope to shed new light on the Fantasia by studying important Fantasias before and after Bach, choosing from Gibbons, Frescobaldi, Fischer, Rameau, Haydn, Bach's sons and others.

We have planned 6 sessions; 4 during the daytime and 2 in the evening. The 4 Master Classes will explore free forms such as Toccatas, Fantasias, Capriccios, and Improvised Preludes. Baroque composers and musicians were great improvisers and yet they followed the strictest rules ever, and to understand this balance, a multitude of free forms will be played and studied. This includes works from England, Italy, Spain, France and Germany.

The two evening sessions will explore music for three harpsichords. The multiple concertos are always the delight of every Festival. There will be chamber music, too, mostly flutes and harpsichord and the last evening will feature a string ensemble who will join us in the Bach and Mozart Concertos.

The Master Classes take place during the day at 10 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. on Tuesday and Wednesday, December 29th and 30th. Preparation for these Master Classes is planned well in advance by corresponding with me. There is such abundance of music that participants are welcome to choose the works they want to study. But it must be decided in advance to avoid duplication of major works and also to make it possible to mail a list of works to everyone in advance so everybody can bring the music that is to be studied and follow in his own book. In this way one may mark things of interest. Should anyone wish to be assisted in the choice, this can be easily done and I have a list of material, including advice on good "Urtext" editions, and in some rare cases, when music is unavailable, some photo-copies may be obtained.

The standard of performance is high, however, being a study group, no one should be discouraged. There is always time to improve and polish afterwards and to enjoy good music. These Festivals aid in gaining a deep insight by joining in informal groups to share these experiences. This is the aim of the Festivals. For additional information you may write to Hilda Jonas Harpsichord Festival c/o Eric Scmore Associates, 111 West 57th St., New York, 10019 or to me at 3942 Ledgewood Drive, Cincinnati Ohio, 45229.

Hilda Jonas

THE HARPSICHORD IN CHURCH

by Gordon M. Betenbaugh

Editors Note: Gordon Betenbaugh, who is Minister of Music of the First United Methodist Church in El Dorado, Arkansas, received his B. M. from Westminster Choir College and a M. M. from Peabody Conservatory. He was head of the Organ Department of the Philadelphia College of Bible and taught choral literature at Peabody both in the undergraduate and graduate departments. He is a Board Member of the El Dorado Community Concerts Association and Program Annotator for the South Arkansas Symphony. He is well known for the exceptional musical program he instigated at his church. His Musical Vespers feature the finest sacred music authentically performed in the church as envisioned by the composers. His organ recitals have merited top reviews throughout the East and South. His wife Helen, also holds a M. M. degree and in addition, is also a Minister of Music at the First United Methodist Church.

Almost all of the current keyboard performers began their study on the pianoforte. With the renaissance of interest in the harpsichord and clavichord, perhaps in the next several decades young musicians will begin their study on either of these instruments.

Those of us who work in the church have an important contribution to make for the advancement of the harpsichord before the uninitiated, as well as for the youth with whom we come in contact weekly in choir rehearsals.

In our program, we use the harpsichord quite extensively in worship services and in our monthly musical vesper services and organ recitals. Having a bent for authenticity in performance of choral as well as keyboard music, we find our instrument in constant use. We are fortunate in having a resident string quartet to provide ac-

companiment for much of our choral music, and with this ideal situation, the harpsichord fits hand-in-glove. The music of the Renaissance and Baroque, in which the harpsichord was the center of activity, is by its very nature enticing to the church musician for use in Sunday worship; particularly in view of the flood of uninspired music with colorful covers as their only selling point with which publishers deluge us. Being as light and portable as it is, the harpsichord can be used in almost any location in the sanctuary—balcony, chancel, narthex. Antiphonal singing or narthex introits and responses, which might be impossible so far distant from the organ, are all easily performed with harpsichord accompaniment.

The harpsichord can be used for the prelude or offertory in a solo role or in ensemble. A good church music program usually has several teen-agers who aspire to be musicians, but their talents would often lay dormant as far as performance goes. The piano is used very little, if any, in divine worship, and it takes time to acquire an adequate technique on the organ. Al-

though the harpsichord is not an easy instrument to master, one can change from a piano technique to that instrument more quickly than he can to the organ. The young piano students are thrilled with their initial adventure with the "little piano." The clavier pieces of Bach and the Baroque period, they soon learn, sound much better on the harpsichord. As well as learning about the instrument, they can make a contribution to the music program and to a worship service through solo performance or by accompanying an anthem that requires a keyboard continuo part.

In my situation, I have found that after the initial step into the musical past, my teen-age apprentices ask, "When am I going to get to play in church again?" Many of the apprentices we have in our program study piano with other teachers in the community and organ with my wife or myself, yet I have always received splendid cooperation from these teachers. They are usually frankly delighted to have their students perform in other than the tedious spring recital. Several have called and asked



Gordon Betenbaugh is shown at the console of the E. M. Skinner organ at First United Methodist Church. The instrument was built in 1926 and has 40 ranks of pipes.

to bring groups of their students to the church to see the harpsichord and to play some of their pieces on it.

Early choral music is greatly enhanced by harpsichord accompaniment, with or without other instruments. The quality of sound is such that, without realizing it, our choir sings with more sensitivity to balance, pitch and musical line when they no longer have the sustained support of the organ. Some of the delightful cantatas of Hammerschmidt, Schuetz, Buxtehude, and Kuhnau are well within the capabilities of even small church choirs. Using leather plectra, I have often added accompaniment to an a cappella choral piece which was unsteady in certain sections or was difficult to tune. The harpsichord is virtually inaudible to the congregation, yet permits more ease in performance for the choir. This, of course, applies only to early music and certainly not to Romantic a cappella choruses.

With a little thought and advance preparation, a whole world of music opens up for worship services. Many violin and flute pieces of excellent musical quality, yet simple enough for the average first or second chair band or orchestra student to play well, are available in modern performing editions. I think in particular of works by Bach, Handel and Mozart.

Church musicians so easily get in a rut of looking only at choral or organ music and reading reviews of only these materials, and thereby overlook a wealth of repertoire superbly suited to worship services. I am sure that I need not advise anyone of the tremendous value of involving young people in activity of this sort. Most band and orchestra students never play a solo any place. Through working on ensembles with these youngsters and a harpsichordist, we have found their dedication to be amazing. The congregation responds to something new and different most favorably, particularly where young people are involved. Variety is essential, especially when one considers what the mass media

bring before the public seven days a week.

Of course, this thumbnail sketch omits discussion of the many hours of coaching, analysis, and class performance of a WTC prelude and fugue or a Handel suite for a service prelude by a sixteen or seventeen year old student, I always feel it has been well worth the extra hours put in "above and beyond the call of duty." Many of these students have become quite discriminating and can readily sift the musical chaff from the wheat as a result of such an association with the ideal instruments for performance of early music and the study of correct ornamentation.

How many professional musicians today can boast performance on a harpsichord as a teen-ager—or, for that matter, even seeing a harpsichord before entering a conservatory? In this respect, I feel that the church musician within a parish situation which can and will support this kind of program is building a literate audience for the future as well as helping a handful of budding young musicians each year to start their careers in this last third of the 20th century when only a "child of our time" could have the advantages of the past added to our modern blessings for a superb education in keyboard music.

SUGGESTED REPERTOIRE:

Solo Harpsichord:

Bach Inventions, 2 and 3-Part.

Well-Tempered Clavier Preludes and/or Fugues.

Partitas—many by early composers are not specific as to instrument. Ex. Pachelbel.

Suites—Handel.

Works of Couperin, Purcell, Kuhnau, Seixas, early Mozart, Scarlatti Sonatas.

Miscellaneous pieces by composers of the period which the student has learned on the piano.

ENSEMBLE PIECES:

Hovhanness, Duet for Violin and Harpsichord, Peters 6439.

Mozart, 6 Sonatas for Flute and Clavier, Edition Teinhardt (Peters).

Bach Concerti—particularly slow movements.

Vivaldi Concerti—particularly slow movements.

Handel Concerti—particularly slow movements.

Album of Easy String Quartets, Kalmar Chamber Music Series.

Franz Mozart, Rondo for Flute and Clavier, Heinrichshofen's Verlag (Peters).

Telemann, Sonata for Recorder (Flute or Violin) and Clavier, Peters 4550.

Handel, Fitzwilliam Sonatas, Edition Schott (Recorder and Harpsichord).

Weihnacht-Sinfonien Alter Meister, Barenreiter 1558.

Even a cursory glance will show the reader that the above list is by no means complete. I have not sought to list what we harpsichordists play as standard repertoire, but what the student is likely to have learned with a piano teacher. With regard to the ensemble pieces, it would be well to remember that much of the music of the Renaissance and Baroque periods was not written in a style indigenous to only one instrument, or notated by the composer as being for that instrument. Historical records abound with stories of the composer's switching of instrumental and voice parts for performance in accordance with the personnel available to him. You will note that several of the scores to the ensemble works are marked "violin or flute" or "recorder, oboe, or flute," or "organ, harpsichord or piano."

Gordon M. Betenbaugh, M. Mus.

The Harpsichord — 9



The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Crosby Brown Collection of Musical Instruments, 1889.

LAVICHORD

of OTE



STUDY the photograph carefully and you will find a rather curious one-of-a-kind instrument. There are four, straight, movable bridges and a key and tangent arrangement that is most unorthodox. The instrument is attributed to Alex Trasontinus, Alex Trasontini, or Alessandro Trasuntino (spellings vary depending on your source), Italian, 1537.

While the years have not been kind to this instrument, the case seems to have been quite attractive at one time. It is covered with stamped leather with traditional designs in brown on a gold ground. The edges are finished with gilt mouldings. The inner cover contains what is reported to be the coat of Arms of a Count of the family Gattola of Gaeta. The keys use the "reverse" color system, the naturals being made of ebony and the sharps ivory.

The instrument is currently owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and was acquired by them as a gift from Mrs. John Crosby Brown in 1889. For many years it was on display in a central case in Gallery 28 which was later changed to New Gallery 37. It is not now on view to the public. (We hear rumours that an exhibit is being mounted now

which will bring many of these instruments into the open again. We hope the exhibit will be permanent).

The Metropolitan Museum of Art catalogue of 1903 gives the following description of the instrument:

"2543 CLAVICHORD. Compass, 36 notes. Ohlong case, covered with stamped leather, with conventional designs in brown on a gold ground; gilt mountings around the edges. The inner cover bears a coat of arms on stamped leather. The keyboard projects. Keys, ebony naturals, with ivory sharps. Italy. 1537. Maker, Alex. Trasontinus.

"Length, 2 feet 5 inches. Width, 1 foot 1¾ inches. Depth, 5¼ inches.

"At present, one string to each tangent, small movable bridges being placed under the strings somewhat after the manner of the early Italian clavichord. On examination of the instrument it seems to have been much altered from its original construction. The keys, which apparently have been renewed, are arranged in a peculiar way, extra sharps being inserted between B natural and C in the lowest octave, and between E and F in the upper octave, with no provision for an F sharp between F and G immediately above. The following inscription and motto on ivory are found within the edge of the case: 'Alex. Trasontini ut osa flos florum ita hoe clavile clavilium hoc opus, 1537.' The motto should read as follows: 'Ut rosa flos florum ita hoc clavile clavilium.'"

We find many questions here. Why movable bridges on a keyboard instrument? Movable bridges are common on most stringed instruments including the violin family, hanjo, guitar, etc., and a sitar has as many as 15 or more, but these all have a fret or finger board and are played with direct finger-to-string contact.

The nicely carved key levers with the gap in the middle seem to have been inspired by a smiling Terry Thomas. The lack of damper felt anywhere in the instrument is also a mystery. Was it to bring sympathetic vibrations into play to enrich the quality of tone, or was it a variation on the *cembal d'amour*. If the latter were

true, the tangents were misplaced since the strings should be divided in half.

Nothing more seems to have been written about this clavichord until 1929 when Philip James of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London wrote the book *Early Keyboard Instruments* which was published by Peter Davis, Ltd. in London, June 1930. Undoubtedly taking some of his material from the 1903 Metropolitan Museum of Art catalogue, he describes this curious instrument in the following way:

"CLAVICHORD by Allessandro Trasuntino (?) Italian, 1537.

"In spite of the fact that this instrument has been extensively altered from its original construction, it is illustrated because it nevertheless has most of the characteristic features of the earliest surviving clavichords. These are the projection of the keyboard, the arrangement of the wrestpins in a straight line parallel with the side of the case, and the straight bridges on the soundboard instead of the more familiar but later S-shaped bridge. These features are also present in the earliest perfect example of a clavichord which is also of Italian origin, being dated 1543 (figured and described in Kinsky, pp. 25-27). In the following plate we see the gradual transition to the type of instrument generally used in the eighteenth century.

"The attribution of this clavichord to the well-known Venetian instrument-maker Alessandro Trasuntino, who made the fine *clavicembalo* now in the Donaldson Museum, rests upon a highly suspicious inscription around the inside of the case. It reads as follows: *Alex. Trasontini up osa flos florum ita hoe clavile clavilium hoc opus. 1537.* This should, of course, read *ut rose flos florum ita hoc clavile clavilium*, etc. The keys have been arranged in an unorthodox and purely arbitrary manner. On the inside of the lid of the leather-covered case there are stamped the arms of a count of the family Gattola of Gaeta.

"Length, 2 ft. 5 in.; width, 1 ft. 1¾ in.; depth, 5¼ in."

We cannot doubt the word of two of the world's most prominent museums. Or can we?

On a recent visit to New York I was the house guest of John Challis, harpsichord maker. As I retired, I found a hookcase tantalizingly close to the bed. For several hours I perused hook after book. In one of them, I found a yellowed clipping of a book review which was written by the well-known British builder, Arnold Dolmestch. It appeared in the July 12, 1930 issue of *The Week-end Review* and the hook reviewed was the above quoted *Early Keyboard Instruments*, by Philip James. In this review, Dolmestch gives us some rather astonishing information.

"Mr. James' love and enthusiasm for the old instruments lends a great charm to his treatment of the subject; but his want of practical knowledge leads him into some curious fundamental errors.

"For example, on page 93 he shows a photograph and describes 'A Clavichord by Alessandro Trasuntino (?), Italian, date 1537'—the query is his; he tells us that 'the instrument has been extensively altered from its original condition'; he mentions 'the highly suspicious inscription round the inside of the case'; also that 'the keys have been arranged in a purely unorthodox and arbitrary manner.' Obviously, Mr. James did not feel quite comfortable about this "Clavichord." He, however, discusses it seriously as a link in the 'gradual transitions,' etc.

"This object never was a musical instrument. It never was altered from its original condition. It is an obvious fake and the man who concocted it is either alive or recently dead. I knew him well in Florence during the years 1897 and 1898. I often visited the two 'palaces' where he made and stored his never-exhausted stock of 'Antiques'. He never missed an opportunity of studying my own instruments, from which he very much improved his own work. He collected old worm-eaten wood, bits of instruments and odds and ends of all kinds. From these he concocted these forger-

ies which abound in American collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of New York. They are not uncommon even in Europe, for a few years ago I found a dozen or more in a famous English collection. Some of our present-day 'authorities' harbor them. To be fair, I must say that all these fakes are not as preposterous as this 'Clavichord.'"

More recently, Raymond Russell in his book *The Harpsichord and Clavichord*, published in 1959 wrote:

"A group of crudely faked clavichords, Italian by construction, but of mid or late nineteenth century date, and not sixteenth century as they pretend, can be identified by the style they have in common with one of their fellows, signed and dated *Alex. Trasantini 1537*."—"These are all made from pieces of old instruments, and the leather covers to some of their cases have been taken from early books; but the lettering of the inscriptions betrays them though collectors and museums have been deceived."

Is this a real instrument which has been altered? Two experts think it is. Or is it an out and out fake? Two more experts believe the latter.

Which ever it is, to be totally fair to the Metropolitan Museum, we must remember that the instrument was not purchased by the museum so they cannot be given credit if it is real, or shamed if it is a fake. It was given to the museum as part of an extremely valuable and important collection of musical instruments. And as every museum board knows, it is often necessary to accept the poor with the great.

When it comes to experts, we might keep in mind what Dolmetsch said near the end of the quoted book review:

"Unfortunately, the author had faith in the 'authorities.' Now, one more authority is to be added to the already formidable list; Mr. James' book will be quoted by the next writer as a matter of course, unless, perchance, he discovers at his own cost, and in good time, as I did, that no second-hand statement is reliable in this perhaps the most misunderstood of subjects."

Hal Haney

BOOKS

A FIRST HARPSICHORD BOOK
by Igor Kipnis. Oxford University Press, 200 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016. 9x12 in. 29 pages, 11 musical compositions. Paper \$2.50.

When we first interviewed harpsichordist Igor Kipnis* he mentioned working on a book for beginning harpsichord enthusiasts. We are happy to report that his book "*A First Harpsichord Book*" has just been released by Oxford University Press of New York.

The first sentence of the introduction states: "This anthology is intended primarily for the new harpsichord owner." which means that the buyer should already know how to play a keyboard instrument. It is not intended for the beginner who wants to learn to play a keyboard instrument and has selected the harpsichord as that instrument. However; those with modest keyboard training should not despair. The compositions selected "range in difficulty from quite easy to intermediate and are presented in that order."

Mr. Kipnis is to be commended on his selection of music, since he has included a number of extremely popular pieces as well as a few rarities. All of them can be played on a single manual, 4½ octave harpsichord with one set of strings such as the Zuckermann kit instruments.

The introduction includes brief excursions into the study of accents and expression, fingering, registration and performance practices. The book contains 11 pieces of music, starting on page 1 with J. S. Bach Praeludium No. 1 in C Major (an early version of the well-known Prelude No. 1 in C Major from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*) and ending on page 28 with Tambourin by Jean-Phillipe Rameau (which appeared originally in the Suite in E Minor from Rameau's second volume of *Pieces de Clavcin*.)

It is always a great help to any student to hear the music he is studying played by a professional. That is

possible with most of this book, since 9 of the 11 compositions studied have been recorded by Mr. Kipnis and are available on Columbia records. A list of these recordings appears on the Contents page.

The book is sheet-music-page in size and the music is open and uncluttered. There is plenty of space for notes on fingering, expression, etc. The composers represented include J. S. Bach, F. Couperin, Byrd, Pasquini, Handel, D. Scarlatti, Daquin, C.P.E. Bach and Rameau as well as that most famous of all composers, Anonymous. Speaking of this collection, Mr. Kipnis wrote "Although there is an instructional purpose to this volume, the music contained herein is also very much intended for the player's own entertainment. In this respect, it is meant to whet the appetite."

We believe, for \$2.50, you not only get a generous appetizer, but a rather satisfying main course as well.

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Meet Nancy Rodenbough



We are proud to introduce our first paid staff member, Nancy Rodenbough. Nancy was born in Houston, raised in Omaha and has lived in Denver since 1949. Her husband, Don, has headed the refinishing department for Baldwin Piano Company for seven years and is contemplating building harpsichords in his spare time.

Unfortunately, Nancy can only brighten our office on Saturdays and Sundays. When she is not tending to the needs of her family of four children, she is full-time Secretary to the Director of Travel Development for the State of Colorado. Bless you, Nancy, for sharing your precious hours with us.

The Harpsichord — 13



Notes on My Second European Tour

by Shirley Mathews

Note: Shirley Mathews has been called one of the most brilliant performers of the younger generation of harpsichordists. She performs from coast to coast for universities, colleges and concert associations as well as guest artist with symphony and chamber orchestras. Miss Mathews was born in Houston, but received her musical education in Michigan. She studied piano with Benning Dexter at the University of Michigan and harpsichord with John Challis. She is a graduate of Goucher College, where she majored in the History of Art. She is the author of several articles involving the relationship of music and painting in the Baroque Era. Her private collection of instruments includes two double manual harpsichords, a single manual harpsichord and an 18th century pianoforte. In this article, she shares with us some interesting and unusual experiences.

The summer of 1969 was the second time my husband, John, and I took our cumbersome instruments to Europe to play. The first time was in 1962 when we took my two manual harpsichords, a Taskin copy made in 1961 by William Dowd and John's old Viennese double bass. We played two kinds of programs: solo harpsichord, and double bass and piano. John has the distinction of being the first American to play recitals on the double bass in Europe. I was one of the early pioneers who took a Boston harpsichord across the Atlantic.

This time I took the same harpsichord. John took his old Italian viola da gamba (1584) and his Francesco Rugieri double bass (1679). We played three kinds of programs: double bass and piano, solo harpsichord, and harpsichord and viola da gamba duo recital. A revolution has taken place in Europe in those seven years. On our first tour, my husband was the favorite. He received rave notices in London for his Wigmore

Hall recital and the same, plus a standing ovation, in Amsterdam. I did poorly with the critics because they did not like my instrument, which is an elaborately decorated and colorful one. It is the very instrument which Dowd used on the cover of his catalog. It is black-green with gold bands. The inside is vermilion with gold bands and Latin mottoes. The soundboard was painted by Dowd himself in the Franco-Flemish style, and I am very proud of it. The instrument has that characteristic antique sound, with robust bass and silvery treble. At my recital in The Hague, the critics thought that it was far too loud. "Scarlati," they wrote, "should be like silver and candlelight. Gentle and mysterious." Instead, they reported, I displayed too-fast technique, and that the harpsichord sounded bold, brash, and typically "American", with garish decoration, et cetera, et cetera. In London I fared better, but it was still too loud. At that time, it was possible to rent an English harpsichord from a renowned London maker, which came delivered and complete with amplification system and speakers inlaid with marquetry to match the instrument! Rental of these harpsichords has been common practice in England, both for residents and visiting artists. After my recital on the Dowd, a critic from the *Times* came up on the stage of Wigmore Hall where I was answering questions and demonstrating the instrument. He searched under the harpsichord and around the stage. I was told later that he was "looking for the wires", because he thought the instrument was amplified. In both places, people commented on my frequent use of the 16' stop, which my instrument does not have!

Remarks made by critics in 1969 were almost enlightened. I insisted that a short description of the instrument, i.e., "This harpsichord is a copy of a French double harpsichord by Pascal Taskin, made in Boston by

William Dowd", be printed on every program we did. Nearly every critique commented on the very beautiful and rich-sounding copy of an antique on which I played, though in Germany, where we played concerts sponsored by the U.S.I.S., my instrument was still a bit loud for them. In my opinion, the instrument was voiced a little under strength, purposely for Europe! The funniest review I got was in Nurnberg where we played our duo recital at the Germanisches Museum. (Curator John Henry van der Meer was my distinguished page-turner.) The reviewer said that I played on a rather nice English harpsichord (in spite of the program notes) but he could not understand why, if I had six pedals, I only seemed to use them between pieces!

We began our tour in Munich in the middle of June at the Amerika Haus with a double bass recital. While in Munich we became re-acquainted with a German physician, Dr. W. Christian Schroeder, who had lived in Baltimore several years ago. He had started the Baltimore Bach Society in 1959, and had made one of the early Zuckermann kits. He was understandably enthusiastic about German factory harpsichords at that time, and so we did not have much in common with him. Before he returned to Germany in 1962, he came to see and play on my Dowd. Last June we spent a marvelous weekend with the Schroeders. Dr. Schroeder was determined to have my instrument in his house, so the four of us, he and his wife, myself and John, carried that eight-foot, one-hundred-sixty-five-pound harpsichord into the living room. We played two-harpsichord music with his one manual Schuetze far into the night. He gave me a copy of his controversial article written the previous summer in which he praised the antique copies at the expense of the German factory harpsichords. (This article is described very nicely in Zuckermann's new book).

After our German concerts, we headed south for Rome, where we played a duo recital for the Associazione Musicale Romana, which to our surprise is directed by an American, Miles Morgan. The concerts are given out-of-doors in a beautiful old cloister garden in the Trastevere section of the city. The accoustics are wonderful, and the setting idyllic: flowers in bloom, trees hanging full of oranges. We were further surprised to find in the small chapel we used for rehearsal William Dowd harpsichord No. 1, made in 1960, which belongs to Mr. Morgan! My most exciting moment occurred at this concert. After intermission, I played a group of Scarlatti Sonatas. During the first one, the lights went off all over the cloister. My first thought was that I had gone blind, but I continued to play to the end. Fortunately, it was a relatively slow one (E major, K. 380) and I did not have to see the keys. In the next piece (G major, K. 427) I did have to see the keys, so a pair of roccoco candleabra were hastily borrowed from the altar of the chapel, and two live putti held them up to light the stage. After several minutes, the lights were restored and we finished the concert.

In Vienna, we went to see the Kunsthistorisches Museum instruments. A museum official invited me to play on some of their rare keyboard instruments, among them Joseph Haydn's big Schudi which is fitted with myriad mechanical devices including pedals and a Venetian swell, Beethoven's Erard piano, and a big Duleken harpsichord which has an unusual feature which allows the uncoupling of the dogleg so that you can play independent two manual music. I also played on a Graf piano given to Brahms by Clara Schumann. It was unrestored (and a third low in pitch) and had five pedals. I lost my mind for their 1785 Walther pianoforte! It was in beautiful condition, and beautifully regulated by Peter Kukulka, chief restorer of the collection, who makes handsome clavichords in his spare time.

In August we went to England where I did some art-historical work

that took me to Windsor Castle to examine some of the Queen's Italian drawings. The librarian, Mr. R. Mackworth-Young, is a unique person whose quiet knowledge is extensive. He is also an amateur harpsichordist and has invented an electronic tuning device which he says is better and much cheaper to build than current ones on the market. We also visited the incredible Colt Collection of keyboard instruments. The collection is unusually complete, and Mr. Colt is enthusiastic about each instrument. Mr. Colt personally escorted us through his collection, with the kind assistance of Derek Adlam, his curator. I was particularly taken with an early Broadwood piano of the late 1780's.

We paid a visit to Fenton House in Hampstead, which houses the Benton Fletcher Collection. The big Schudi in the main parlor is a very beautiful sounding instrument and a pleasure to play. Mrs. Enid Winder, the curator, kindly invited me to examine and play on any and all instruments. I believe my favorite was the Ruckers which belonged to Handel. It is not in original condition, of course, having been enlarged and otherwise modified in the 18th Century and since. But the tone is pure gold!

On the way to our concert in Oslo, we passed through Northern Germany where we stopped in Leer to visit the Klaus Ahrends whom we had met at the Schroeder's in Munich. Mr. Ahrend makes handsome instruments with a full and pleasing sound. They are not completely historical, and consequently the tone is somewhat altered. His Italian is quite interesting. The sides are thicker than I am accustomed to, and the tone begins with a crisp attack characteristic of Italians. Instead of a fairly short resonance, however, the tone goes on and on . . . and on!

We stopped in Bremon to see Mr. Skowronek whom we found to be most cordial. He had two harpsichords he made which are his personal instruments. One was a large Duleken-type after the Vienna instrument, and the other a Ruckers copy which appeared

to be two hundred and fifty years old, made in 1961. The keys on the Ruckers were made of bone, the paper decoration was beautiful, and the sound was most lovely.

In September I played two programs in the Museum of the Conservatoire Royal in Brussels on the big 1734 H. A. Hass (Plate No. 85 in the Russell book). I played all J.S. Bach, with the exception of two Rameau pieces on the first program. This was a most pleasant-sounding Hass, 16' stop and all. The shove coupler, on the bottom manual worked like a sticky old drawer, complete with its own sound, and I had to yank on it to make it function which amused the audience. The 8' choirs sounded very good in spite of the 16' (which I used only once in each program), and the instrument was fun to play. It was restored in 1959 by Knud Kauffman, and needs more work after all this time to make in really beautiful condition. Some of the (real) quills were as old as the restoration. Mr. Kauffman makes a very nice copy of this instrument, which I find superior in tone to the original. I might add that the copy of Frank Hubbard's book in the museum library is tattered and dog-eared with use.

Our tour ended September 21 in The Hague. This time the critic began his review with praise for the same instrument which was disdained seven years before. I must admit to a feeling of chauvinistic pride when people came to look at the instrument afterward. The United States is a good fifteen years ahead of Europe in its connoisseurship of the old keyboard instruments, thanks primarily to Mr. Hubbard and Mr. Dowd in Boston, the city which Bill Dowd nicknamed at least ten years ago, "The Antwerp of the New World."

Shirley Mathews

*Mary All The Joy That Is
Music, Be With You This
Holiday Season And In
The New Year.*

*Hal Haney
Ed Golikoff*

A HARPSICHORDIST'S GUIDE TO OXFORD

By H. M. Schott

*Editors Note: Howard M. Schott, who is a Charter Member of our Society, was born in New York City and received his B.A. and LL.B. degrees at Yale. He also attended the University of Michigan, Columbia and City University of New York. Your editor had the pleasure of enjoying dinner and a recital by Mr. Schott in his 5th Avenue apartment hours before he left for England. He now lives in a village near Oxford where he is a member of Wadham College working for a D. Phil. in music. His interest in the harpsichord and its music dates back to his undergraduate years at Yale in the 1940's, during the heyday of Hindemith, Kirkpatrick and Schrade. After practising law for many years, he is now devoting himself entirely to scholarly pursuits in music. His book *Playing the Harpsichord, a practical guide to the instrument and its repertoire*, will be published in New York and London in the spring of 1971. Schott has just begun work on a new edition of the late Raymond Russell's classic work, *The Harpsichord and Clavichord, An Introductory Study*.*

Few cities have been more written about than Oxford. Small wonder, for it has unique significance as the home of the oldest university in the English-speaking world. The University of Oxford was established by clerics in the middle of the 12th century, modern scholars tell us, and was thus not founded by Alfred the Great as ancient legends had it. Colleges have continued to be founded in the university just as new states of the United States have continued to be added from time to time. And the analogy to a federal system is startlingly close, really.

The city of Oxford, apart from its university, has an important life of its own as a center of industry and commerce. There is a striking mixture of the medieval and the modern. Just

as with the university, the city is not content to live on its past glory. Sometimes the urge to modernize gets rather out of hand, but public protest against a proposed ravaging of ancient monuments or the precious countryside is remarkably effective.

Music formed a part of the medieval curriculum in the university and degrees in music began to be awarded in the 16th century. By 1627 the Heather Professorship in Music and been established. The present holder of the chair, Sir Jack Westrup, known to every lover of baroque music for his pioneer work on Monteverdi and Purcell, will retire in 1971, and be succeeded by Joseph Kerman, who is currently professor at the University of California at Berkeley. This "reverse brain-drain" is very much the thing at Oxford right now and a number of professors at American universities have been named to important posts here during the past couple of years.

The treasures of the Bodleian Library and other collections within the university include many items of unique importance in the history of music from medieval polyphony down to quite recent compositions in autograph scores contributed by great and famous composers who have received honorary Doctor of Music degrees. For the harpsichord enthusiast, especially the hobbyist builder of harpsichords, the greatest treasure of all would be the James Talbot manuscript in the library of Christ Church, one of the Oxford colleges attached to the local cathedral church of that name. This 17th-century document records many fascinating details of the construction of various instruments, especially the materials used in building them at that time. Vast quantities of 17th and 18th century English keyboard music are contained in the manuscript collections at Oxford. Only a fraction of these pieces have as yet been published.

The musical life of the university

and the town revolves around a number of musical societies which were founded during the 19th and 20th centuries for the cultivation of orchestral, choral and chamber music, even opera. A few very important musical events take place every year in the sumptuous precincts of the Sheldonian Theatre. This handsome baroque structure was designed and built by Sir Christopher Wren before 1664, that is, early in his student days at Wadham College but while he was still professor of astronomy (!) in the university. The Sheldonian is principally used for the great academic rituals from matriculation, a solemn ceremony indeed, to the great degree ceremony, *Encaenia*, at which statesmen and scholars receive their honorary doctorates. But to hear, for instance, a performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* in this setting is especially moving; the beauty of the setting heightens that of the music.

In addition to societies devoted to secular musical activities, most colleges have chapels in which Anglican and other services are regularly held. In addition to Christ Church, both New College and Magdalen offer extraordinarily fine sacred music in the time-hallowed English style. They use boy trebles and male altos as well as the lower men's voices and feature that haunting, strangely hollow choral sound which is associated with this tradition. Their carol services in Advent are outstanding attractions which draw capacity audiences every year from far and wide. The other colleges, which do not have elementary schools attached for the education of choristers, can only present more modest services.

As one would expect, the pipe organ plays an important part in college musical life. Most chapel instruments are modest specimens of the late 19th and early 20th century style of organ building in England. But a few of the instruments in the chapels and even one or two in local churches

are quite splendid organs of a larger sort. My own favorite, by no means the biggest of them, is the Frobenius organ in the chapel of the Queen's College. Many of the best organists of our time, such as Lionel Rogg from Switzerland and David Lumsden, who usually presides at the larger console of his own organ in New College, are frequently heard in recital at Queen's and elsewhere, too. The tradition of organ playing and the cultivation of the music of Bach and his predecessors in that context has helped pave the way for creating an audience for the music of the harpsichord's classical repertoire.

Oxford's principal concert hall is the Holywell Music Room, opened in 1748 and said to be the oldest room in Europe built solely for the public performance of music. Alas, Holywell Street, a narrow but vital thoroughfare, carries so much traffic that concerts are invariably punctuated by the noise of a stream of vehicles which flows by unceasingly. Still, between cars one can even hear a clavichord quite clearly, so fine are the acoustics. On the platform stands a superb 18th century chamber organ which has recently been restored, and is used for performances which require or can accept an organ continuo part. A small German harpsichord belonging to one of the music societies is usually to be found on this stage, too, but it has worked so hard for so many years that performers tend to avoid playing it except in direct need.

The concerts offered in the course of the season include many which make use of the harpsichord as well as other early instruments. Indeed, David Munrow's Early Music Consort and other similar groups, offering a repertoire like that of the New York Pro Musica, for instance, are frequently heard in Oxford. Old music is definitely the "in thing." An outstanding annual event is the English Bach Festival which divides its concerts between London and Oxford about equally. In the provincial city it uses not only the Holywell Music Room but also other handsome buildings in the uni-

versity and even some of the stately homes of England located nearby. The concerts feature the works of Bach and his contemporaries as well as other specially selected music each year, often of a quite advanced contemporary idiom.

Naturally the harpsichord is central to the Bach Festival, being used in almost every program. Famous performers from all over Europe appear each year. In the spring of 1970, for instance, the English harpsichordist, Colin Tilney, performed an exquisite recital of Bach pieces for solo harpsichord. During the 1969 festival, George Malcolm, the doyen of British harpsichordists, had played a similar concert for us. Chamber music concerts feature such distinguished players of the harpsichord as Eduard Mueller from Switzerland and Edith Picht-Axenfeld from Germany. Even the indefatigable Lina Lalandi, one of the musical directors of the festival, always "doubles" at least once on a keyboard instrument.

As for the balance of the season, it includes almost as many concerts as the major musical centers of the world and far more than are offered in many large cities. For sheer quantity, the season is extraordinary by any standard. Quality varies, as one might expect. Thus, on one evening the B. B. C. Symphony may perform magnificently in the Sheldonian Theatre, on the next the Oxford and Cambridge joint symphony orchestra may undertake bravely to play Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, and on the third an enthusiastic but not-too-skilled group of players may prove once more the indestructibility of great music. It all adds up to a rather mixed bag. But considerable quantities of music are heard which do not loom large on conventional concert programs: medieval, renaissance, baroque, and contemporary.

It was difficult for me, as a performer, to find a real novelty for my first appearance in Oxford. With the help of my friend, Virginia Pleasants, the American harpsichordist who resides in London, I put on a program of music for two harpsichords by

Bach, Couperin, Krebs, and a group of Elizabethan composers. An able string ensemble backed up the soloists in the two Bach concertos. We used my two Taskin model harpsichords by William Dowd of Boston which brought a new kind of old sound to English ears, one which they seemed to relish greatly.

Oxford, as one might expect, is rich in historical instruments. The Taphouse Collection housed in the university's Music School is blessed with some outstanding specimens, including a superb Shudi & Broadwood double harpsichord of 1781, a beautiful little spinet by John Harrison of London dated 1749, and a magnificent clavichord of five octave compass by Hieronymus Albrecht Hass built in 1743. The university's fine arts collections are housed in the Ashmolean Museum, the oldest public art gallery in Britain. In addition to the superb Hill Collection of viols, violins and lutes, the Ashmolean also owns two important harpsichords, a Jacobus Kirkman of 1772 fitted out with all the resources of a large English two-manual instrument: machine stop, Venetian swell and the full complement of registers; and a fine large virginal made by Adam Leversidge in 1670. The Kirkman is kept in playing order and, after a recent requilling, was played in recital by a young English harpsichordist from Cambridge, Christopher Hogwood. The virginal is about to be restored and may be used for future concerts at the museum.

Oxford is also very much a center of harpsichord making in Britain. Headington, an outlying borough of the city, is the home of Robert Goble and Son harpsichords. A group of handsome red brick buildings arranged around a semi-circular drive contains both the home and workshop of the Gobles, Sr., Robert and Elizabeth. In the workrooms son Andrea and a team of cabinet-makers produce the wooden portions of the instrument, the resonating box, as it were, while in another section the finishers under the supervision of Robert Goble install the action and perform the

voicing and regulating functions needed to make the instrument play. The harpsichords are in the tradition of Arnold Dolmetsch's later years which is not surprising for that is where Robert Goble learned his craft and met his wife, a harpsichordist who owes her artistic formation to the same master. Thus, the instruments are heavily constructed as compared with classical models. Leather is the preferred plectrum material and the larger models boast a 16-foot stop. The clavichords, strung in brass throughout, occupy a middle ground both in compass and scaling between the small 4-octave type and the large German 18th-century 5-octave instrument. For many years the type of modern harpsichord represented by the Goble instruments have been the most frequently heard variety in the British concert halls. Now a trend towards more traditional instruments has set in, especially among the younger generation of harpsichordists. There are unconfirmed reports that the Gobles are planning to make some lightly-built French model double harpsichords in addition to their present models.

Such a return to classical models of harpsichord has motivated many harpsichord builders in recent years from Boston to Bremen and all points east and west. But David Rubio is surely unique among this group because he has approached harpsichord building from a new direction. He is, of course, the world famous builder of guitars and lutes used by such eminent performers as Julian Bream. In the course of developing his craft, he has expanded his production from the standard types of classical and flamenco guitars to embrace a wide range of renaissance and baroque varieties of plucked instruments: archlutes, citterns, almost anything for which a historical model exists. From that it was but a step to making plucked string keyboard instruments. Some months ago Rubio's Opus in the harpsichord field was unveiled. It was definitely a French double harpsichord, but, as an interesting change, Rubio has preferred an adaption of

Italian construction principles, one used by a number of late 17th and early 18th century French and English builders to the modified Flemish design used by the Blanchet and by Pascal Taskin. The scaling and the keyboards, however, are based on the Blanchet-Taskin design.

Rubio has settled in Duns Tew, a picture-book village between Oxford and Banbury. The thatched roof and quaint windows of the sprawling farm house begun in 1495 hardly suggest that half of it is devoted to the instrument builder's craft. Across the road is the handsome 15th century church where concerts are frequently given, many utilizing instruments produced by David Rubio and his able crew of expert workers.

One might well add Charles Mould's name to the list of Oxonian harpsichord builders, but he claims to be primarily involved in research into old English instruments, especially those of Jacob Kirkman. Still, Mould has made a number of replicas of historical instruments and may well continue to do so. A youthful retired colonel, Mould is both a lecturer on engineering and master of a residence hall at Oxford Polytechnic, while also enrolled at the University as a doctoral candidate, preparing a dissertation on the life and works of Kirkman.

Oxford's major contributor to the study of historical keyboard instruments is indisputably Donald Boalch. A modest and retiring gentleman, he holds the position of Keeper of Scientific Books in the University's Radcliffe Science Library. Ever since the first edition of *Makers of the Harpsichord and Clavichord 1440-1840* appeared in 1956, Boalch has been busy after hours gathering additional data for a revised one. Now it looks as if the second edition will be published in the next year or two. When it is, readers will find it about half again as long as the original, listing many important instruments which have recently come to light, and a wealth of supplemental information about instrument makers.

The number of harpsichord

building hobbyists in Oxford is probably not too large as yet. Strange and disappointing to tell, there is no university club devoted to the instrument, although there are those covering every sport from cricket to tiddly-winks, and every shade of political opinion from Machiavelli to Mao. But one hears, for instance, of a student at University College who has been working on a French double for many months and may have succeeded in finishing it over the 1970 summer vacation. An American graduate student at New College did produce a good copy of the 1574 Giovanni Baffo (Victoria & Albert Museum, London) which he proudly took home with him to California. Kits of the pre-packaged type are just about to come in here. Up till now the British hobbyists have usually had to work from scratch, even dealing with bent sides and keyboards as best they could.

Thus concludes the harpsichordist's guide to Oxford, a city which merits an even longer visit from harpsichord buffs than most tours are likely to allow. It is hoped that this brief sketch of some of Oxford's beauties and treasures, this outline of its musical life, and a few words about some of the personalities in the harpsichord world associated with it, will induce the readers of *The Harpsichord* to include a stay here during their next trip to Britain.

H. M. Schott



Dear Mr. Haney,

First of all, thanks to you and the other writers of *The Harpsichord* for the continuing high interest of the magazine articles. Particularly interesting this quarter was Mr. Biggs' article on Bach's Trio Sonatas.

Does anyone know where one may obtain a copy of Francis Poulenc's *Concerto Champetre* for harpsichord and orchestra? Possibly one does not hear it much nowadays because it is, after all, written with a Playel in mind! (There is a beautiful International Piano Library record-

ing of this work out, with Wanda Landowska, for whom it was written, as soloist.) It would be interesting to hear what the work sounds like on, say, a Dowd.

Mr. Furst's letter from Africa about non-urtext editions of old music brings up a point which more music publishers ought to take to heart. Is there even in *existence* a complete urtext edition of the Mozart Piano Concerti, for instance? I've looked for one unsuccessfully.

Best wishes to you all.

Richard Troeger
475 Georgetown Ave.
San Mateo, Cal. 94402

Gentlemen:

I still think the interview with John Challis was one of the greatest I have ever read. He is an inventor and a *thinking* man, and even though I have heard his instruments but never examined one, I feel sure that someone who would go out on a limb and make a metal sounding board is really exploring territory for other people. The music world is being greatly enriched by this man. We people who would like to learn something about instruments are almost groping around in the dark. We don't know what books to read or where to find books on instruments, and you dare not ask a piano salesman or a piano company or they begin to think that you are out to put them out of business. No, don't ask a tuner either for I have only met two such piano tuners who were willing to admit there even was such an instrument as a harpsichord. And never ask your piano teacher, for he knows even less. Mine gave me a long lecture on the touch and technique of the clavichord, but then admitted that she had never played one and only saw those that were in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and they are beyond the age of being played. I have learned from other musicians and continue to do so. That is the reason for the wealth of materials in the Challis article. I also like to read the column of Wallace Zuckermann. I feel that you are doing a very important

service to the music world with your fine magazine, and I am privileged to read it.

James Hoffman
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Sympathetic Vibrations . . .

(continued from page 3)

since the age of the wood may have changed the tone over the years (for better or worse) and since strings and other parts could not be duplicated exactly; (3) There are neither the funds nor, more importantly, qualified restorers for a job of such magnitude. The few restorers qualified for such a task have their hands full with their own work: (4) Once an instrument has been restored, it is irretrievably lost to the future student, who wants to see what it originally looked like; thus the world supply of harpsichords in original condition is constantly getting smaller, and the tendency of museums to entrust a restoration to anyone in their area who dabbles in old instruments results in many instruments botched up beyond recognition (some slides showing the work of piano tuners upon old instruments demonstrated this convincingly.)

Two ideas for a compromise emerged which are perhaps acceptable. (1) Build as close a replica of the original and let **EVERYONE** play the replica; strangely enough it is easier to build a close replica than undertake a careful restoration and many more people would be qualified to build a copy (should they fail, it would have no bearing on the original instrument). (2) If you must restore, take a careful series of photographs in as much detail as is possible to show what the original looked like.

All told, the meeting was a good beginning, and should be followed by many more such meetings. At the present time, the harpsichord world is much too provincial and isolated from its individual members, and the fresh air of stimulating cross discussions is very much to be welcomed.

Wallace Zuckermann

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